

SAF/LLZ (Legislative Research Team)

BONILLA, Henry (Republican)  
Representative, 23rd District, Texas  
Elected 1992 to 103rd Congress  
Reelected to succeeding Congresses



## BACKGROUND

Born: San Antonio, Texas - 2 January 1954  
Home: San Antonio  
Marital status: Married (Deborah) - two children  
Religion: Baptist  
Education: Univ of Texas, Austin, BA, 1976  
Profession: Television news executive  
Military: None

Political: No previous experience. Asst Press Secretary for PA Gov Richard Thornburgh, 1981. Defeated incumbent Albert Bustamante (D) with 61% of the vote for the enlarged 23d District, which expanded from 9 to 29 counties, becoming the first Hispanic Republican Mexican-American in the House. Reelected in 2000 with 59% of the vote and in 2002 with 51%.

Rep Bonilla, one of just three Hispanic Republicans in the House, is a conservative. Described as "personable, energetic, photogenic, and fearless" in support of a pro-business, antiregulation ideology. He received the only GOP freshman seat on the Appropriations Cmte in the 103rd Congress.

In the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress, pointed to the Air Force's recruiting plans as proof of the Administration's poor support of the military. (San Antonio Express, 5Feb99) Noted that FY00 Defense Appropriations Bill contained increased funding for Brooks AFB. Expressed pleasure that Cmte recognized the importance of research conducted there and said the funding will allow the base to be world-class research facility. (San Antonio Express, 14Jul99) Commenting on the F-22, remarked that we all want to fund it, but asked where's the help from the Administration on how to do this. (Dallas Morning News, 17Jul99) Praised FY00 Defense Conferees efforts regarding final outcome on Brooks AFB "city base" program language. (San Antonio Express, 7Oct99) Intro, with colleagues, H. Con. Res. 444, expressing the sense of Congress that all members of the uniformed service and their dependents should have their right to vote be reaffirmed by actions of the Attorney General, particularly to protect those rights in Florida. Discussed a "city base plan" at Brooks AFB, which would operate more like a business park than a highly secure installation, and in the event of base closure, would help transform the installation and save jobs. Urged SecAF Peters to keep T-38 maintenance work at Randolph AFB.

In the 107th Congress, expressed the concerns of his colleagues regarding the implications of base closures. Said he would not support a new round of military base closings until the Congress looks at reining in peacekeeping missions; suggested we could save billions on US military operations abroad. Observed that the Army's new recruiting campaign slogan, "An Army of One," is an attempt to overcome the recruiting failures of recent years by tailoring itself to its audience. Believed that funding for overhauls on the T-38 should be among the highest priorities. Suggested that a letter from the Texas delegation to SecAF requesting a delay in the signing of a support services contract at Lackland AFB signaled that there was a problem and the way the contract was awarded needed to be reviewed. Joined several colleagues in calling for hearings on absentee military ballots. Secured \$8 million to replace an old administrative building at Laughlin AFB.

Additional: Member, Air Force Caucus. Television news reporter, KTVV, Austin, 1976-8; Asst news director, WTAF, Philadelphia, 1985-6. Ft Bliss is in his district.  
AF Bases: Laughlin AFB; Hondo MAP (Eagle Pass Aux Fld closed Aug 94)

## COMMITTEES

APPROPRIATIONS – Subcs incl: Defense; Agriculture - Chmn; Foreign Operations